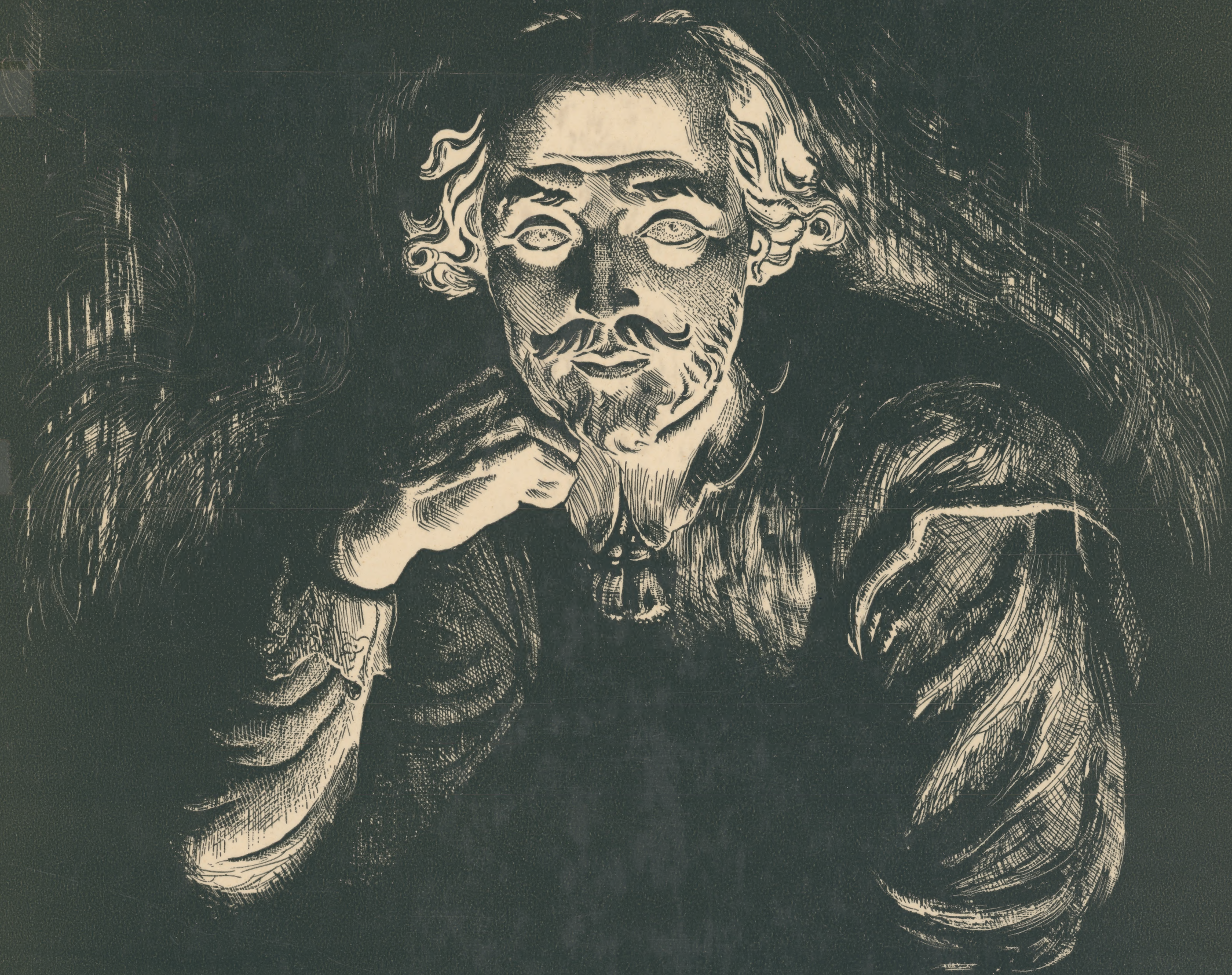


S/P
Sh1so



The Works of Shakespeare

THE SONNETS

argo

RG 142-144

S/P
Sh1so

THE SONNETS

recorded by

THE MARLOWE SOCIETY

and

PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS

directed by GEORGE RYLANDS

under the auspices of THE BRITISH COUNCIL

TO. THE.
ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. INSUING. SONNETS.
MR. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
AND. THAT. ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.

BY.

OUR. EVER-LIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.

T. T.



RECORD ONE

side one *band one* SONNETS 1-17
band two SONNETS 18-25
side two SONNETS 26-51

RECORD TWO

side three SONNETS 52-77
side four SONNETS 78-103

RECORD THREE

side five *band one* SONNETS 104-115
band two SONNETS 116-128
side six SONNETS 129-154

TECHNICAL NOTE: The length of sides in these records is longer than the average desirable for an LP recording. In order to accommodate these Sonnets economically on three LP records it was decided to dispense with scrolls, which absorb about 40 secs. of recorded time, between particular Sonnet groups. However each side starts and ends a particular sequence, and two scrolls have been used to give some help in picking up the recordings at a particular place.

Issued in association with CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

by

ARGO RECORD COMPANY LTD

113 Fulham Road, S.W.3

THE SONNETS

recorded by

THE MARLOWE SOCIETY

and

PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS

In 1609, when Shakespeare turned from tragedy to romance, when he was forty-five and had seven years to live, a Quarto was published with the title: *Shake-speare's Sonnets. Never before Imprinted*; it contained also the strangely unappreciated *A Lovers Complaint*. The dedication of the volume to "the onlie begetter Mr. W. H." has baffled scholars to this day. Thirty years later the Sonnets were reprinted in *Poems: written by Wil. Shake-speare. Gent.* which included *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, elegies and memorial tributes to Shakespeare, and poems by divers other hands.

When did Shakespeare write his Sonnets? They are mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598, along with a list of his plays to date, as "sugred Sonnets among his private friends". The quarto of 1609 carries no author's epistle, as do *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). Misprints and errors of punctuation suggest that the poet had not overseen the text. The consensus of opinion has long held that the Sonnets belong to the early and middle years of the last decade of the sixteenth century, as having affinities with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*. Recently, however, the indefatigable and ingenious Dr. Leslie Hotson, a discoverer worthy of the Elizabethan Age, has made the revolutionary suggestion that the Sonnets were written before 1590. His case is based on a re-interpretation of Sonnet 107, whose enigmatic line, "The mortall Moone hath her eclipse indur'de", he takes to mean the defeat of the Spanish Armada, which is depicted in a contemporary map and described in several writings as a vast crescent, or semi-circled, or horned Moon. Dr. Hotson supports his case further by referring a line in Sonnet 123, "Thy pyramyds buylt up with newer might", to the erection of the Egyptian obelisks in Rome by that mighty builder and formidable Pope Sixtus V in each of the years 1586 to 1589. And finally Dr. Hotson holds that Sonnet 124 is concerned with the insurrection against Henry of Valois, King Henri III of France, sometime suitor for the hand of Queen Elizabeth.

His brilliant exposition may have failed to convince the more die-hard dons, but it is tempting to believe that he is right. The strangest thing about Shakespeare is that we know nothing about him between the ages of 17 and 27—the most formative and fruitful period in a poet's career. Keats died at 26; Shelley and Emily Brontë at 30. Whatever Shakespeare may have been doing between his youthful marriage and his first job as a "super" on the

and red in the flowers of the field or in the lip and cheek has wondrous power to pierce through the eyes unto the heart. The poet, as Sidney explains, is also a workmaster and idealiser, outstripping at once the philosopher and Nature herself. "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done—neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden". And then again the friendship which Shakespeare knew and immortalised—touching on it dramatically with Proteus and Valentine, Antonio and Bassanio, Horatio and Hamlet—goes back through mediæval romance and chivalry to the heroic brotherhoods in arms of Greek myth, legend and epic. Shakespeare's genius lies in his double power in the sonnets of idealising and naturalising. A few sentences of Coleridge written when he was 23—just the age, maybe, when Shakespeare tried first to express himself in sonnet form—will serve to conclude this introduction:

In a Sonnet we require a development of some lovely feeling, by whatever cause it may have been excited; but those Sonnets appear to me most exquisite, in which Moral Sentiments, Affections, or Feelings are deduced from, and associated with, the Scenery of Nature. Such compositions generate a kind of thought highly favourable to delicacy of character. They create a sweet and indissoluble union between the intellectual and the material world. Easily remembered from their briefness, and interesting alike to the eye and the affections, these are the poems which we can "lay up in our soul", and repeat them "when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise up."

London stage—whether he was a country schoolmaster, a strolling player, or a soldier in the Low Countries—surely he must have been writing verses. His first two published works are poems which show that he was no beginner but an accomplished virtuoso, expert in tropes, with a marvellous ear and a large vocabulary; one who could blend the spun sugar of Elizabethan confectionery with country savours and a subtle essence all his own. His first attempts at drama when he was competing with the University Wits have plenty of crudities. Nevertheless he outdoes Kyd and Greene and even Marlowe. His early plays abound in felicities and beauties sufficient to furnish forth a century of sonnets. May there not indeed be passages in the plays of the 1590s which he had “set down in his tables” five or ten years before? The Queen Mab speech for example: or Titania’s “These are the forgeries of jealousy”: and, conceivably, “To be or not to be”? The greatest poet in the language must have composed canzonets and woeful ballads when he was 21.

The Sonnets, as we have them, are haphazard in arrangement, and many readers like to make their own selection and scheme. But some of them fall into groups. The first seventeen are variations on the theme on which Venus dilates to Adonis: “Thou wast begot; to get it is thy duty”. They are to some degree formal exercises addressed to a patron. But Nos. 12, 15 and 16 look forward to the grand manner of the great Time sonnets, inspired ultimately by Roman poetry; Renaissance rhetoric at its best. These (Nos. 19, 55, 60, 63-65, 107, 124-126) cry out to be grouped together and they are matched by passages in the plays. Another sequence is concerned with the rival poet (for whose identity if Hotson is right there are new possibilities, including Marlowe), and another with the Dark Lady. Sometimes two or three or four sonnets make a sequence and on occasion a sonnet of superlative excellence surprises us between two of inferior quality. To ease the monotony which is inevitable if one is to listen to more than a hundred and fifty poems by one hand in a single and restricted form, where every line is a decasyllable and must be rhymed according to the same pattern, the sonnets have been distributed between ten different voices. This helps to emphasise different moods, to mark variations on a theme in the opening sequence, and to suggest links and collocations. For instance Sonnets 71-74 which treat of the poet’s imagined death have a grave melancholy of their own. And then sometimes the changes are abrupt. Sonnet 116 (“Let me not to the marriage of true minds”) is immediately followed by “Accuse me thus . . .”, which strikes a more bitter and dramatic note which is sustained until Sonnet 122. Sonnet 18 demands a more youthful and romantic voice than those which have preceded it. The difference in age of the readers in fact covers a span of more than thirty years.

More than a few sonnets are hard to construe, although the editor of 1640 claimed that “in your perusal you shall find them serene, clear and elegantly plain, such gentle strains as shall recreate and not perplex your brain, no intricate or cloudy stuff to puzzle intellect, but perfect eloquence.” Four-fifths true perhaps. Unevenness there must needs be. A good opening sometimes is not sustained. In some sonnets we treasure only a quatrain or a single line. After all the total count is as long as a Shakespeare play. The very best however are only rivalled by Sidney at *his* best, and those below the best hold their own with Spenser and outstrip all but two or three isolated examples by the numerous practitioners of this passing fashion which perhaps John Donne confounded. Shakespeare’s sonnet

form, three quatrains clinched with a couplet, is less exacting, less intricate than the Petrarchan; but it is to be noted that the Petrarchan conception, in which the sestet answers or comments on or gives a turn to the octave, is frequently to be detected beneath the simpler Shakespearian structure, so that we enjoy a double effect.

There are several styles in the Sonnets as there are many moods. The variety of expression is notable. Some are purely decorative and some rhetorical in the Elizabethan manner. In others the poet disputes or moralises or makes confession in soliloquy. Very often he is dramatic and direct. We catch the tones of the speaking voice, as in Sir Thomas Wyatt and Donne, although with less emphasis; the voice which the dramatist is to perfect as an instrument. For instance,

Then hate me if thou wilt; if ever, now;
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross. (90)

O never say that I was false of heart (109)

Alas! ’tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to to the view. (110)

The range of expression moves between the conscious art of, say, Sonnet 63—“*That time of year thou mayst in me behold*”—in which each quatrain completes a different image, and the apparent artlessness and easy flow of “*Being your slave, what should I do but tend/ Upon the hours and times of your desire*” (57). Again and again we come upon felicities of phrasing which startle and delight: *sessions of sweet silent thought, thy dial’s shady stealth, Time’s million’d accidents, the darling buds of May, three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned, the proud full sail of his great verse, bare ruin’d choirs where late the sweet birds sang, captain jewels in the carcanet, the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come.*

The hero of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is enslaved by

‘A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes’.

The most powerful of the sonnets treat of Shakespeare’s tormented passion for just such a wench; black-browed, black-eyed—and false. But the main bulk celebrate a selfless and devoted friendship; a devotion which is spiritual and aesthetic, a marriage of two minds, yet genuine in its suffering and its exultation, its pride and humility, its anxieties and loneliness and disappointment. If the praise of the fair friend strikes us as extravagant and fanciful, it is because of a failure in understanding and imagination. We must relate it to the Elizabethan scene; to the miniatures of Nicholas Hilliard, to the tapestried Arcadias, the madrigals and canzonets, the masques and progresses, the taffeta phrases and spruce affectation of euphuism, the rustling silks, the jewels and perfumes, the court of Gloriana, the earthly Diana, the Faerie Queene. This exquisite and exaggerated sophistication—only one side of the medal, of course—is the inspiration of the sonneteers. It is a form of idealisation and therefore Platonic. All earthly beauty, natural and human, is a pattern of the Ideal. Spenser’s *Hymn in Honour of Beauty* tells us that when the great workmaster cast the mould of the world, he had before his eyes a comely pattern excelling all mortal sense and thereof every earthly thing partakes, or more or less, by influence divine. Thus it is that the white

William Shakespeare

Copyright Record All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited

33 $\frac{1}{3}$ **argo** 33 $\frac{1}{3}$

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

RECORDING FIRST PUBLISHED 1958 Side 1 ARG. 2037 **RG.142**

Band 1—Sonnets 1-17
Band 2—Sonnets 18-25
read by
Members of the Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL
MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2037-1D

Copyright Record All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited

33 $\frac{1}{3}$ **argo** 33 $\frac{1}{3}$

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

RECORDING FIRST PUBLISHED 1958 Side **2** ARG. 2038
RG.142

Sonnets 26-51
read by
Members of the Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL
MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2038-ID

Copyright Record All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited

33 $\frac{1}{3}$ **argo** 33 $\frac{1}{3}$

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

E/T Side ARG2039
RECORDING FIRST **3** **RG 143**
PUBLISHED 1958.

Sonnets 52-77
read by
Members of The Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2039-4D

William Shakespeare

Copyright Record. All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance, Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited.



33 $\frac{1}{3}$

33 $\frac{1}{3}$

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

E/T
RECORDING FIRST
PUBLISHED 1958

Side
4

ARGO 2040
RG 143

Sonnets 78-103
read by
Members of The Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2040-ID

Copyright Record All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance, Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited



33 1/3

33 1/3

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

RECORDING FIRST
PUBLISHED 1958

Side
5

ARG. 2041
RG. 144

Band 1—Sonnets 104-115
Band 2—Sonnets 116-128

read by
Members of The Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2041-D

William Shakespeare

Copyright Record. All rights of the Manufacturer and the Owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised Public Performance Broadcasting and Copying of this Record Prohibited



33 $\frac{1}{3}$

33 $\frac{1}{3}$

THE SONNETS
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

RECORDING FIRST
PUBLISHED 1958

Side
6

ARG.2042
RG.144

Sonnets 129-154
read by
Members of The Marlowe Society
and Professional Players
Directed by George Rylands
Recorded under the Auspices of
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

MADE IN ENGLAND

ARG-2042-ID